SPECIAL FEATURE
ALICE RICHMAN SCHACHNER

OCTOBER 2, 1978

NUBIA: AFRICA IN ANTIQUITY
(VOICED PIECE AND INSERTS IN LIBRARY)

VOICE: THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM IN NEW YORK CITY HAS JUST (SEPT. 30) OPENED THE FIRST COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION EVER DEVOTED TO THE ARTS OF ANCIENT NUBIA AND THE SUDAN. ALICE RICHMAN HAS THE STORY:

VOICE: NUBIA'S HISTORY SPANS FORTY-SEVEN CENTURIES. BUT THE STUDY OF ITS CIVILIZATION IS QUITE NEW. A LOOK AT THE MAP EXPLAINS WHY. THE LANDS THAT BELONGED TO NUBIA STRADDLE THE BORDERS OF WHAT IS NOW MODERN EGYPT TO THE NORTH AND THE SUDAN TO THE SOUTH. WHEN EGYPT WAS WEAK, NUBIAN KINGS RULED. BUT WHEN EGYPT PREVAILED, THE NUBIAN CIVILIZATION ALMOST DISAPPEARED. BUT THE ANCIENT CULTURE SURVIVED INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. THEN IN THE NINETEEN-FIFTIES THE HIGH DAM WAS BUILT AT ASWAN AND THE FLOODING WATERS OF THE NILE DOOMED THE EGYPTIAN PORTION OF NUBIA FOREVER. ARCHEOLOGICAL TEAMS FROM TWENTY-FIVE COUNTRIES RUSHED IN TO RECORD, RELOCATE OR SALVAGE THE MONUMENTS. NOW, SOME OF THE FRUITS OF THEIR LABORS ARE ON DISPLAY AT THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM. MUSEUM DIRECTOR MICHAEL BOTWINICK DESCRIBES THE INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE EXHIBITION.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- BOTWINICK

"WE WORKED FOR A PERIOD OF FOUR YEARS IN CONJUNCTION WITH OUR COLLEAGUES IN THE STAATLICHE MUSEUM, (IN EAST BERLIN, WHO REPRESENT ONE OF THE GREAT CONCENTRATIONS OF APPROXIMATELY THREE HUNDRED OBJECTS ON LOAN FROM APPROXIMATELY TWENTY MUSEUMS IN SEVEN OR EIGHT COUNTRIES... TO EXAMINE THE EXTRAORDINARY HISTORY OF THIS CULTURE THAT EXISTED FROM ABOUT THREE THOUSAND B.C. TO ABOUT FIFTEEN HUNDRED OR SIXTEEN HUNDRED A.D., A CULTURE THAT IS OFTEN LOOKED AT AS A KIND OF SUB-CHAPTER OF EGYPTIAN

TAPE: (CONT) ART. BUT REALLY A CULTURE - A CIVILIZATION THAT EXISTS IN ITS OWN RIGHT AS A KIND OF CROSS-ROADS BETWEEN THE ANCIENT WORLD AND THE AFRICAN WORLD."

VOICE: THE NUBIANS OF FIVE THOUSANDS YEARS AGO PRODUCED PAINTED CERAMICS AND FIGURINES. GOLD JEWELRY AND FAIENCE SCULPTURE FOLLOWED. BURIAL GROUNDS OF A THOUSAND YEARS LATER REVEALED FUNERAL BEDS INLAID WITH IVORY FIGURES OF ANIMALS AND GODS. GLAZED POTTERY, OFTEN FASHIONED IN THE SHAPE OF ANIMALS, IS SAID TO BE UNRIVALED IN THE ENTIRE NILE VALLEY FOR ITS BEAUTY, COLOR AND DELICACY.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- BOTWINICK

"THIS EXHIBITION WILL REPRESENT THE COMBINED WORK OF - I WOULD GUESS - THIRTY OR FORTY SCHOLARS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD WHO HAVE FOCUSED ON NUBIA AS AN ACADEMIC PROBLEM AND HAVE PRODUCED AN EXTRAORDINARY CATALOGUE WHICH WILL PROBABLY BECOME THE STANDARD IN ITS FIELD WHICH WE ARE HOPING TO PRINT NOT ONLY IN ENGLISH BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER PRINT AN EDITION IN ARABIC. SO MANY PROJECTS IN BOTH EUROPE AND AMERICA HAVE FOCUSED ON THE MIDDLE EAST BUT RARELY FIND THEIR WAY INTO THE RESEARCH OF SCHOLARS IN THE MIDDLE EAST BECAUSE OF THE LANGUAGE BARRIER. AND THERE WILL BE A SYMPOSIUM IN AMERICA IN THE FALL IN WHICH WE WILL TRY AND REGATHER ALL THESE PEOPLE HERE IN NEW YORK TO KICK OFF THE WHOLE PROJECT."

D
Q
A.

VOICE: BERNARD BOTHMER IS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EGYPTIAN AND CLASSICAL ART AT THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM. HE IS AN ART HISTORIAN AND HE RESPONDS TO NUBIAN ART IN TERMS OF WHAT IT TELLS HIM ABOUT THE LIFE OF A CERTAIN PERIOD. THE FABLED KINGDOM OF KUSH IS ONE SUCH EXAMPLE. KUSH RULED NUBIA FOR ABOUT ONE THOUSAND YEARS AND EGYPT FOR ONE HUNDRED YEARS.

ITS LEADERS ADOPTED MANY OF THE TRAPPINGS OF EGYPTIAN PHARAOHS, BUILDING MORE PYRAMIDS IN THE SUDAN THAN THERE ARE IN EGYPT. PYRAMID CHAPELS WERE DECORATED WITH

VOICE: SCULPTURE AND TOMBS WERE FILLED WITH OBJECTS IN PRECIOUS
(CONT)
METALS. EXTRAORDINARY GOLD JEWELRY, A SILVER CROWN SET WITH SEMI-PRECIOUS STONES AND A BRONZE LAMP ARE AMONG THE OBJECTS ON DISPLAY AT THE MUSEUM. MR. BOTHMER THINKS THAT NUBIAN ART IS A VITAL LINK TO THE ORIGINS OF ALL AFRICAN ART:

TAPE: CUT THREE -- BOTHMER

"SO NUBIA IS, FOR THE HISTORY OF AFRICA, ENORMOUSLY IMPORTANT. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE ANTIQUITY OF AFRICA ESPECIALLY WITH THE INTEREST IN THIS COUNTRY IN THE ORIGIN OF MANY OF OUR MINORITIES. WHAT YOU HAVE IN THIS EXHIBITION GOES BACK TO THE FOURTH MILLENIUM B.C. THE OLDEST PIECE WE HAVE HERE IS FROM ABOUT THREE THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED B.C. SCHOLARS HAVE ESTABLISHED A VERY SOUND SEQUENCE OF NUBIAN CULTURES FOR WHICH WE HAVE PRACTICALLY NO HISTORY. BUT WE CAN SEE FROM THE DETERIORATION OF CERTAIN FORMS HOW A CULTURE BEGINS, CULMINATES, DIES AND A NEW CULTURE TAKES OVER."

VOICE: THE ARTS OF ANCIENT NUBIA AND THE SUDAN OFFER A RARE OPPORTUNITY FOR VISITORS TO EXPERIENCE SOMETHING OF THE HISTORY OF A PEOPLE WHICH WAS ALMOST LOST FOREVER BENEATH THE WATERS OF THE NILE.

##

RK/PY